

A GUIDE TO HATE CRIME SUPPORT

A guide to hate crime support – PLAIN TEXT VERSION

DEDICATED TO SOPHIE LANCASTER

Who died aged 20 in August 2007, in an unprovoked hate crime attack.

To Thine Own Self Be True.

This Guide provides information and advice about hate crime. It was developed in response to our 2022 survey, which highlighted the devastating impact that hate crime was having on people from alternative subcultures.

Despite the profound effect it had on those targeted, 73% of these hate crimes were never reported.

We have packed as much information and guidance as we can into this Guide. We want to help people better understand hate crime, empower them to report it and feel supported through the process. We know the Guide is long, but there are distinct sections, so you can concentrate on any specific area you need to. It has been created in a zine design. If you would rather read it in a plain format, you can access a plain text version too.

It can be a tough read and sensitive topics are mentioned throughout. We can't talk about hate crime without being real and reflecting how it can affect people. If you need support see the section – Who can help me get over this? or contact the Sophie Lancaster Foundation: hatecrime@sophielancasterfoundation.com. Please don't go through this alone, we will do all we can to help or signpost you to support.

Although we have created this Guide to primarily support the alternative community, many of us experience hate crime targeted at multiple aspects of our identity. If you know someone from another community who is experiencing hate crime, much of our advice is still relevant, so please do share this Guide with them.

This Guide was created as part of our ACT (Alternative Communities Together) project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. This project has transformed our understanding of how hate crime is affecting the alternative community and highlights the work still to be done.

We remain committed to our mission, to do all we can to Stamp Out Prejudice, Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere.

The Sophie Team

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Reflects legal and policing practice within the jurisdiction of England and Wales.

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CHAPTER 1: What is hate crime (if not this)?
Understanding definitions and misconceptions

Call me a freak, call it a phase
Spit in my path and laugh in my face
Turn your back when I say it's hate
But I wear these scars like battle paint

Is this a crime, or the straight world's game?
Do I tick your box or take the blame?
You say it's 'style' like that makes it fair
But I bled on the street and you weren't there

Tattoos cover my pierced skin
Does that excuse what's been done to me again?

When fists fly 'cause I look like this
Don't tell me it's fashion, don't tell me to bend
This ain't no joke – this ain't no pretend

What is hate crime, if not pain?
If I scream and they laugh, is that not the same?
Don't wait for the law to catch up with the truth
Report it, scream it – we are the proof!

They say it's hate, but not "the right kind"
Like fear and shame don't even define
What ticks the boxes of their rigid forms
So your truth gets filed, then dumped in a drawer

So what do I do with this busted lip?
With my t-shirt torn and my ego stripped?
Do I tell the police?
Do I waste my breath?
Will they chalk it up as 'a lifestyle death'?
The bruises are real – even if they don't fit Inside your box of what 'hate' is legit

What is hate crime, if not this?
When I'm hunted down for the studs on my wrist

Don’t tell me it’s fashion, don’t tell me to bend
This ain’t no phase – this ain’t no pretend

What is hate crime, if not pain?
If the boots leave marks, can we give that a name?
Don’t wait for the law to catch up with the truth
Report it, scream it – we are the proof!

We are the proof
We are the proof
WE ARE THE PROOF
It’s HATE!

What is hate crime?

Hate crime – what an appalling phrase to contemplate. It’s something no one wants to have to experience on a personal level. But many of us do experience it, and usually for reasons that are beyond both comprehension and sense.

Being on the receiving end of hate in any form can be incredibly destructive – even fatal. That’s why, here at Sophie Lancaster Foundation, we’re committed to reducing these devastating impacts, so that people from alternative subcultures can feel free to be who they are, unimpeded by threats, harassment, and assault.

In this chapter, we’re going to look at how hate crime is defined, whether alternative people are protected within this definition, and how you can decide for yourself if the negative behaviour you experience, or witness, should be reported as a hate crime.

What is a hate crime to you?

Before we get into the official definition, let’s think about what you might consider to be a hate crime.

Maybe you’ve been out and about – at school, on the bus, in town, getting a takeaway – when something horrible happened, and it all kicked off. Just because of the way you looked.

Your hair, tattoos, clothes, makeup, or piercings just triggered something in your assailant. Something that threatened the sanctity of their bubble of what they consider to be ‘normal.’ It made their ignorance explode into hatred.

They might have followed you and yelled abuse, spat on you, threatened you, or even started on you physically. All for no other reason than they didn’t like the way you look.

Sure seemed like a hate crime at the time. You probably suffered psychological trauma, if not physical. You might have questioned your identity and felt bullied into conforming to your assailants’ standards just to ‘fit in.’ Maybe you even self-harmed as a way of coping with the stress of what you experienced. We see these kinds of effects happening all the time.

But are they officially ‘hate crimes’?

How is hate crime defined officially?

We’re not going to sugar coat it. Right now, we believe that the law is inadequately geared up to help people from alternative subcultures to report hate crime.

The law recognises five types of hate crime on the basis of:

- Race
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity

Any crime can be prosecuted as a hate crime if the offender has either demonstrated, or been motivated by, hostility, towards these five characteristics. The fact that you’re even reading this guide means that you know for yourself that there’s at least one group that’s missing from this short list of potential hate crime

victims – people from alternative subcultures. Not to mention unhoused people, sex workers, and other groups of people who are clearly targeted due to their identity.

And we're on your side. Every day, we come into contact with alternative people who've been verbally and physically abused, often by strangers. We work with people who've been threatened on social media, attacked while out and about, and even targeted at their homes.

The very reason we exist as an organisation is that the daughter of our founder was beaten to death by teenagers for no other reason, than they wanted to 'bang the moshers'. They stomped on 20–year-old Sophie until she was in a coma – her life support machine was switched off thirteen days later.
If that's not hate crime, we genuinely don't know what is. Which is why we're working our hardest to get the law changed to broaden the definition to include people like you.

But that's not the end of the story. There's a lot more to the legal definition of hate crime than that.

Broadening the scope of the hate crime definition
OK, so the law doesn't currently acknowledge the idea that hostility toward your alternative appearance is a hate crime. But don't be disheartened. There are official bodies who have gone on public record to say they're in your corner.
The College of Policing, the official source of professional practice for policing, for instance, states:

> "There are, however, other groups and individuals who may be targeted due to their personal characteristics. Forces, agencies and partnerships can extend their local policy response to include hostility against other groups or personal

characteristics, they believe are prevalent in their area or that are causing concern to their community."

This is a vital point for anyone reporting a hate crime to have in mind. It should be a wake-up call to anyone who tells you, "It can't be a hate crime, because you're not protected by hate crime legislation," that yes, it can be. You can find the quote **here.**

Another chink in the armour of the official hate crime definition comes from True Vision, the official, nationwide hate crime website for the Police – an amazing resource. They have a dedicated page on their website that goes into great detail about Sophie Lancaster and alternative subculture hate, making them an informed organisation to report hate crime to.

You can see that page here: https://www.report-it.org.uk/alternative_sub_cultures
We'll go into how to report hate crime to True Vision, in full, in a later chapter.

So what does hate crime look like for the alternative community?
OK, you've experienced something nasty, and you want to report it. But there's probably a little voice inside your head telling you, 'Don't report it as a hate crime – they'll just make you feel stupid for it.'

First thing – turn that little voice off, right now.

If you think you were abused purely out of hate based on your alternative identity, you're probably onto something. Don't let them tell you you're wrong just because they don't consider you to have a legitimate grievance.

Just make sure you ask yourself these questions before you do anything about it:

- Was I harassed?
- Did I experience threatening behaviour?

- Was I the victim of vandalism, e.g. to my car, my clothes, my belongings?
- Were my belongings taken from me just to undermine my sense of self?
- Was I verbally or physically abused?
- Did I fear for my safety?

For something to be chargeable and prosecutable as a hate crime, it must do two things:

- Pass a criminal threshold which makes it a criminal act
- Prove, beyond reasonable doubt, that hate was the motivation behind the incident

It's not up to you to decide if it passes the criminal threshold, or if it can be proved that the incident was motivated by hate. If you feel that it was a hate crime, you can report it and let the law decide. You also don't have to have been the victim involved. You can report a hate crime if you witness it or if it has happened to a friend, family member, or someone else you know.

Hate crime is often directed at people from minority groups – especially stereotyped and demonised ones. Hate crime says you are weird, you are different, and whatever I am doing to you is justified because of that difference.

It alienates, others, and shouts that there's something wrong with you. But there's nothing wrong with you – only with those who made you feel that way.

If you're in any doubt…

We'll leave this chapter with the thoughts of His Honour Judge Anthony Russell QC, who sentenced Sophie Lancaster's murderers in 2008.

He said that Sophie's death should be, "equated with other hate crimes such as those where people of different races, religions, or sexual orientation are attacked because they are different."

His words may not have changed the law right now. But they opened the door to criminal justice agencies recognising alternative hate crime and reflecting it in sentencing those crimes.

CHAPTER 2: Say it anyway

How to report and describe what has happened

I got the words, but they’re stuck in my throat –
Every syllable’s a fight, every breath’s a croak flashbacks come like a fist in my face I know what happened, but will they call it 'hate'?
Scars on my skin, bruises on tape
But I’m scared they’ll say it’s “just your look, mate” they’ll say I’m the problem –
Cut my hair, play the part
But this ain’t fashion –
It’s who I am in my heart!
I write it down, I say it loud
Even if they laugh, even if they doubt

I build my truth with every line
Don’t care if they choose not to call it crime
Society wants to silence the hate
I say it anyway, I say it anyway
Filmed the assault on my mobile phone
I’ll make them the stars of my own TV show
Show them shouting “freak!” and throwing the first blow
Tell me – how’s that not a true hate crime though?

I journal every second, every scream and stare
The jokes, the spit, and the pulling of hair
Every “goth,” “emo,” “loser,” and “freak”
Coz my silence won’t erase what happened last week

Snap the shot, save the thread,
Shed light on what they hope stays dead
This ain’t revenge, this is survival

Truth is a weapon, truth is vital

I write it down, I say it loud
Even if they mock, even if I’m not proud
This is my skin, my soul, my fight
You don’t get to say what’s wrong or right
Society wants to silence the hate

I say it anyway, I say it anyway

What to say

Reporting a hate crime or hate incident can be nerve-racking. Whether it was a one-off experience that spurred you on to say something, or a prolonged period of aggression, there’s probably a lot you want to get off your chest. But you may be nervous about doing so, especially if you’ve made reports in the past and been on the receiving end of what you felt was a prejudiced response.

How do you put your experience across in a way you’ll both feel comfortable with and get the authorities to take you seriously?

Read on to learn how to structure your thoughts so that your report covers everything you want to say and, more importantly, gives the police as much information as you can to help them investigate.

Start by journalling your experience

Writing down the details of your experience is one of the best things you can do before you report it. Firstly, because it might take you some time – even months or years – to pluck up the courage to do something about it, and it’s easy to forget or mix-up important details.

The more you remember – especially when the torment goes on for a long time – the easier it will be for the Police to investigate thoroughly.

Secondly, it will help you to organise your thoughts so that you're able to give a calm, clear, and easily understandable report to the Police.

Include factual details of what happened and a full description of the person or people involved and what they did. Don't forget to write down how you felt - were you terrified, angry, shamed? Was anything stolen or damaged? There's a full checklist at the end of this chapter to consider. Don't worry if you don't have all this information – most people won't. It is just to help you record as many details as you can.

What to tell the Police

Your journal puts you in a great place to now go to the Police confidently and armed with everything you need to give them a full, clear, factual report. You might even choose to read directly from it when you call to help you stay calm and ensure you cover everything off.

Start with the big picture, e.g., 'I've been targeted for what I consider to be a hate crime,' or 'I'd like to report a hate incident.'

Then gradually narrow down the information so that the Police get a full understanding of what's happened before you start getting into details. You might, for instance, write, 'I've been subjected to ongoing harassment and online abuse,' before listing the details of what happened.

If you feel that your experience was more of a hate incident than a hate crime ,i.e., no criminal behaviour took place, you shouldn't feel any less confident about making a report. Especially if it was part of a repeated pattern of abuse by the same person/group.

There are many notable cases where hate incidents have escalated with devastating consequences, so the police tend to take repeated occurrences much more seriously. And, either way, it's important to make sure the Police do know about them in case a related crime ever does occur – to you or someone else.

Finally, if you have additional needs or vulnerabilities, such as age-related or physical disability challenges, make sure you let the Police know early into the conversation. This will help them to understand the level of risk involved and that there is a serious safeguarding issue at stake.

Report checklist

The Police will be keen to get as many details as they can to help with their investigation. This comprehensive checklist will help you to make sure they have everything they need.

<u>Location</u>

- Indoors or outdoors?
- Number of street or name of building?
- Were you in a specific room or area?
- What landmarks were close by?

<u>Date and time</u>

- How closely can you pinpoint the time(s) of the experience(s)?
- What were you doing exactly before it/they happened?
- What did you do immediately after?
- Was anything specific happening that helps to identify the time, e.g., fireworks, last orders bell, a lorry making a delivery?

<u>The person you're reporting – if you know them</u>

- Their full name

- How you know them and where from
- The history of your relationship with them
- Their address, phone number, and email address, if you have them

The person you're reporting – whether or not you know them

- Their height and build
- Their estimated gender, ethnicity, and age
- Their hair, skin, and eye colour
- Any distinguishing features, e.g., birth mark, glasses, or regional accent?
- What were they wearing, e.g., style, colour, brand?
- Make and model of car, and registration number, if relevant
- Any other noticeable details

Bystanders and other witnesses

- Details of anyone you were with at the time
- Descriptions of anyone who was with the perpetrator
- Descriptions of any bystanders who witnessed the incident
- Details of any possible CCTV footage that might help, e.g., in a shop, club, or on the street

Why you think it was a hate crime or hate incident

- Do you have a specific characteristic that prompted the hostility, e.g., was it a comment about your hair, clothes, or piercings?
- Do you think it could have been about another aspect of your identity, e.g., your race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity?
- If the hostility was random and not made clear, what do you think prompted it and why?
- Do you think you were targeted for more than one reason, and if so, why?
- Were specific words, symbols, or slurs about your identity used during the incident?

- What evidence do you have that what you experienced was motivated by hostility?

How you felt during the incident and after it

- In fear for your life?
- Depressed, self-destructive, or suicidal?
- Scared to go to the same place again, or out at all?
- Worried that your friends or family may be targeted?
- Nervous that things could get worse if not dealt with?

Do you have any additional evidence?

- Photos
- Videos
- Audio recordings
- Threatening emails
- Social media screenshots
- Threatening letters or grossly offensive mail.

CHAPTER 3: Why Is This a Debate?

Who cares if it's a hate crime

They say it's woke, they say it's fake
Say I'm too soft, say I'm just on the take

They say it's just words, just harmless jokes
Say i should take the prods and pokes

They say "free speech", like some kinda shield
Like my vulnerability ain't the one bein' revealed

They say "real crime doesn't look like this"
Like fear and shame won't cut you to bits

Why is this a debate?
Why explain my pain?
Why is this a debate?
It's breaking my brain

Why is this a debate?
I'm not a problem to solve
Why is this a debate?
Why are you even involved?

Every headline turns my life
Into a culture war soundbite
They argue terms, split hairs
I'm only tryin' to breathe out there

I'm not a theory, I'm not a trend

Not playing dress-up or pretend
This is my face, this is my name
And they're asking why I complain

They don't see it, so it's not real
They don't feel it, so nothing's revealed
They call it snowflake, I call it harm
They say prove it, I raise the alarm

Why is this a debate?
I'm not a politician
Why is this a debate?
Hate's not just philosophical
Why is this a debate?
It started with your rage
Why is this a debate?
It does so much damage

Who cares if it's a hate crime?

It seems weird writing a chapter to explain why hate crime is wrong and so devastating to its victims. You'd think the premise of someone committing a criminal act against another person – targeted solely because of a characteristic (or characteristics) of their identity – would make it clear as to why it's so vile. It asserts that people are wrong just for being who they are.

But we're struggling as a society to balance the nuances and complexities of hate crime. There are daily media, and social media, attacks citing the very concept as being:

- Woke as an insult
- Against freedom of speech
- Virtue signalling

- Not like real crime
- An exercise in telling you what to think
- Wasting police resources

For those of us on the side of fighting hate crime, this leaves us in a double bind. We not only have to keep doing the essential work, but also explain it to people who think we're wrong. And it's important that we do.

Why is hate crime treated as special by the UK Criminal Justice System?
Let's break down why hate crime, as a concept, deserves the attention we give it. A good place to start would be to explore why hate crime is treated as a special case by the criminal justice system in the UK.

You might think, when you're on the receiving end of a criminal act, that it makes no difference why you were targeted and that the effects are the same, whether it was hate or otherwise. But that's not what research tells us.

According to the April 2022 to March 2025 Crime Survey for England and Wales, almost twice as many victims of hate crime said they'd suffered a loss of confidence or felt vulnerable after the incident (44%) compared with victims experiencing the same crime without the motivation of hatred (24%). Hate crime victims were also more than twice as likely to experience fear, difficultly sleeping, anxiety or panic attacks, and depression or tears compared with victims of overall headline crime.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales is a major, ongoing household survey that, because it also includes unreported crimes, gives a vitally broad understanding of the nature and extent of crime. And the data it uncovers backs up what we already know from the alternative community from our own hate crime research.

Over two thirds of people affected told us that their experience of hate crime had made them feel anxious, vulnerable and avoid certain routes or areas. Additionally, 55% said it made them feel depressed while 37% said that hate crime made them change their appearance and attempt to conceal their identity. Horrifyingly, 27% said it made them feel suicidal.

The societal impact of hatred

Of course, the psychological damage cause by hate crime is more profound for the people who experience it, but it also has another destructive effect: spreading fear and anxiety across entire communities, escalating tensions within them, and forcing them to become more fragmented, leaving people socially isolated.

When hate crimes aren't investigated and aggressors aren't held responsible, it sends a twofold message out – firstly, to victims, telling them that they're not as important as the rest of the community; secondly to the perpetrators, telling them that they're untouchable. In other words, not addressing hate crime endorses victimising people.

And that's in no way characteristic of "free" society, no matter what some people might argue. But don't just take our word for it. Allport's Scale of Prejudice, developed by American psychologist Gordon Allport in 1954, helps to show us how prejudice escalates when unchallenged in society.

According to the scale, societal prejudice begins with what he calls "antilocution," which includes negative verbal remarks, gossip, vindictive jokes, and hateful speech against "outgroups." Unchecked, this then turns into "avoidance," where members of the in-group actively ignore people in the out-group, and if this continues without recourse, it grows into "discrimination," "physical attack," and at the most brutal end of the scale, "extermination," which is what occurred to Jews and other minority groups across Europe during WWII.

Yes, that's at the very extreme, but just look at the story of our Foundation, if you want evidence of how quickly communities can progress through the Scale of Prejudice. Our story begins with the murder of Sophie Lancaster in the town where she lived. And the judge in the murder trial explicitly cited Sophie's difference from her perpetrators as the sole motivation for the attack.

It's not dramatic to point this out. It's what can happen when people see members of their community who look different. They might judge them for their difference, scapegoat them, and then victimise them. We see it happen all the time. We also hear regular stories of how prejudice has influenced the very organisations that are supposed to protect and enrich communities – the police, NHS, schools, employers, housing associations, and so on.

In other words, people in those spaces judging people based on their appearance, alone. This tells us that prejudice doesn't begin and end with individuals – it becomes entrenched in society. So we have to start at the very beginning – with "antilocution" – to have any chance of stopping hatred from gathering momentum and reaching all the way up to the systems and structures that serve society.

But what about the right to free speech?

The thing that often comes up in response to our campaigning against hate speech is the idea that, if people are held accountable by law for how they speak to others, they'll have to walk on eggshells so as not to risk offending anyone. Our detractors tell us that we're limiting their democratic right to express themselves and that this, in itself, is oppressive and controlling.

It can sound pretty convincing, when put like that, which is why these kinds of messages can take root in communities, undermining the essential work we do. So, we have to pick that argument apart to show clearly why there's a difference between free expression and hate speech.

Let’s start by saying how hugely important freedom of expression is in a democratic society. It’s what brings diversity of opinion into news media, political debate, educational curriculums, and countless other areas, so that we’re able to share ideas, challenge power, prevent propaganda, and improve policies. That’s why it’s protected in the UK by the Human Rights Act 1998, as a “qualified right.”

What we have to understand, however, is this last phrase – qualified right. It means that, whilst UK residents and citizens are entitled to hold and express ideas without public authority interference, their speech can be restricted by law when it puts public safety at risk or threatens disorder.

So, whilst everyone in the UK has the right to hold our own opinions, express ideas and information, criticise government, religion, institutions, and ideologies, and say things that are offensive, shocking or unpopular, there are some things we can’t do:

- Target protected characteristics (race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and transgender identity) – we are campaigning to have alternative subcultures added to this list
- Incite hatred or violence by stirring up negativity toward a protected group
- Use threatening, abusive, or insulting language with the intention of causing harassment, alarm or distress to a protected group

This helps to maintain an essential balance between being able to hold cultural groups accountable for their behaviours whilst making sure no one is singled out, victimised, and dehumanised just for being who they are.

What’s offensive versus what’s an offence?

We thought it would be really helpful to give you a list here of what is, and isn’t, hate speech.” In trying to pin it down, we realised you need a law degree and an encyclopaedia, as well as 100 pages devoted to the subject. You’d also probably be no wiser at the end of it anyway.

Individuals, organisations, communities, the police – they all have different takes on it and different pressure points. And context is everything. All we can do is try to state what we think is the best way to determine what crosses the line.

The law isn't there to stop you being offended. People say lots of things that other people find offensive. You can dislike people's clothes, or music taste or say they are weird. It might be offensive, it might be really hurtful, but the language itself isn't hate speech. It is an opinion and one they don't have to share quite so freely, but we know that they do.

Changing those views comes from another key thing we do – education and engagement to open people's minds to difference. But we can't use the criminal justice system to make everyone think the same as we do – nor would we want to. When you turn those expressions into stating that people don't deserve to live, they should be rounded up or their dwelling burned down, then that is hate. When they are dogs, vermin, inhuman and they don't belong in normal society, then that is hate.

These examples stereotype entire groups, dehumanise individuals, demand exclusion and segregation, and incite harm. Don't tell us that they are just opinions. We have seen in our own streets how easily hate can mobilise people who are looking for a group to victimise. And how violent and terrifying those mobs can be. If you hear or read something you think is hate speech, then do report it. It is not your job to understand the intricacies, and you are taking action to try to stop the hatred that directly harms individuals and our communities.

That's why, whenever we hear people write off hate crime legislation as "woke nonsense" and call anyone who believes in it a "snowflake," our first thought is always how lucky they are not to have been touched by hate crime in their own

lives. When you come home to graffitied slurs on your door, when you are violently attacked because of your clothing, hair or make up, when you are harassed every day on the street just trying to get home from work because of people's responses to what they think you are, it steals away all your attention and robs you of your peace of mind. It settles in the dark places and makes you frightened to go out, alienated from those around you and always on alert it will happen again.

Having opinions is different from hating people and, then, vocalising and amplifying that hate or acting on it. We need to start having more conversations about what is wrong with the perpetrators of hate – not the victims.

CHAPTER 4: A Hater Loves a Silent Type.

Why reporting hate crime is important

You want me quiet, you want me to cope
Reckon my silence is the same as hope
Like if I don't speak, it'll just fade away
Like fear will dissolve with the time and days

But every little time I let it slide
You get a gut feelin' that hate's on your side
Try to walk it off on my bedroom floor
Knowing you're just gettin' bolder than before

This crap won't stop if I stay small
Hater loves a silent type, suppressing a squall
What starts with me, ends with so many more
If no one says it's wrong anymore

It starts as noise, it turns to routine
Then it's everywhere I've ever been
Different angry faces, same vicious lines
Goths, metalheads, and punks getting undermined

You find each other, find people to snub
Threatened by our dress, form your little hate clubs
All the while I'm doing nothing but standing here
Thinking, 'I'd be better off if I just disappeared'

But silence is NOT a neutral ground
It's a space that haters like to fill with hate sounds
If nobody names it, nobody knows

How far this kind of abuse might go

It’s not just me I’m standing for
It’s every silent type who stays behind the door
Hater loves never, ever gettin’ stood up to
Cuz now they’re the only ones who get to choose

So what if I’m scared, so what if it’s hard
When I fail to speak, I play my card
Cuz hate unchecked never stays contained
It just looks for the next outsider to blame

Why report hate crime?

Hate crime rarely remains an isolated act. Offenders escalate in both the severity and the frequency of their behaviour, especially when they receive encouragement from others who share their prejudices. It sadly makes sense. They group together with other people who think like them and actively encourage them with their warped view of the world. Hate grows when it goes unchallenged. That is why reporting it is so important. When incidents are ignored, the harm continues – whether to you or to someone else. Communities become divided, with the most hostile voices dominating.

As Holocaust survivor, Elie Weisel, put it: ‘what hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander.’ That’s why it’s on all of us to play our part, and report hate crime when we see it (whether in person or on social media). Because the solidarity of communities can be transformational, not just for the victims, but for the communities themselves.

It’s not an easy thing to do, and if you’ve experienced or seen hate crime, you may well feel a bit reluctant to do anything or get involved. Totally understandable. Hate crime is designed to make people feel that way: scared and isolated.

Perpetrators try to make you feel as though you're the problem and that everyone else agrees with them. Unsurprising then, that many victims end up trying to change how they dress, where they go, or even where they live, rather than report it. Just seems easier than dealing with the consequences of making your aggressor angrier and more violent – even if 'easier' means living in dread and not being able to be yourself.

That's no way to live, though. And it's not right that anyone feels they have to live that way. So let's look at some strategies on how to deal with it.

When in doubt, report and find out

Emotional and practical barriers often prevent people from reporting hate crime. In our own research, people from alternative subcultures described the same obstacles commonly reported by other groups targeted by hate crime.

These include things like being too embarrassed, not being heard, or not being taken seriously. Some reported prior bad experiences of reporting incidents to the police and thinking it wouldn't make any difference. Some said they didn't know where or how to report.

Thing is, being abused for how you look can warp your thinking. Repeated social pain changes how your brain learns to interpret the world. You get so used to it that you find yourself wondering which incidents were just horrible and frightening and which were actually crimes.

Just put all that to one side, though. If it left you feeling scared, vulnerable, threatened, or worse, you should seriously consider reporting it. It's not for you to determine if a crime has been committed. That's the police's job. They're paid to investigate reports and protect us.

What happens when you make a report?

Whether the hate crime happened to you or someone else, reporting it can be help in lots of ways – from ensuring the safety of the victim and beyond. When you make a report, the police create an official record of the incident.

Even if no action is taken against the perpetrator due to insufficient evidence, or you later decide that you don't want to progress the case, the record remains. This can be a useful way to deter aggressors from future incidents or, at the very least, strengthen any future reports if further incidents occur.

The police will also give a crime number to you when you make a report. This is useful if you're the victim in dealing with other organisations, e.g., talking to a housing association about potentially moving away from a neighbour you've reported – those crime numbers will certainly add weight to your case. They also help victims seeking compensation for costs incurred due to an incident, such as vandalism, or wilful damage to your property or belongings.

When a victim reports a crime, they also get directed to victim support services, which is hugely important. Talking to someone, receiving counselling, or accessing tailored support can be one of the most meaningful outcomes of reporting hate crime – sometimes even more so than justice being served. (And remember, even if you choose not to report a hate crime, support is still available. You can self-refer to Victim Support and there are other agencies that can help. See our section on 'Never on your own' for contact details.)

How about online hate?

Reporting online hate is just as important in challenging prejudicial or criminal behaviour, we make offenders accountable and responsible for their content. This can help reduce future harm and hold platforms to greater account.

If you report hate to a platform and are dissatisfied with their response or don't get a response at all, you can then report the issue to Ofcom.

Whatever you do, don't take on your aggressors personally on social media. It only puts you at greater risk, because not everyone behaves in ways that are rational and proportionate, and some of the most hateful agitators can be relentless in their abuse and harassment.

We hear so many people telling us that they've been 'doxed,' - had their private details shared in online spaces so they can be targeted for abuse. So, if you're thinking about posting a response to hateful content online, for the best of motives, do think long and hard, because the repercussions can be terrifying.

The impact of not reporting hate crime

Hate crime is significantly underreported. This can be devastating because it creates a harmful cycle. Aggressors are emboldened by getting away with it, victims become more isolated and more reluctant to report their experiences, and the stakes keep getting higher and higher. Ultimately, this can escalate into major incidents or wider community tensions.

Not reporting incidents also slows down the process of getting abuse of alternative people recognised as a monitored strand of hate crime. The Law Commission's 2021 review of hate crime legislation recommended that alternative subculture should not be added as a monitored strand, because it didn't see sufficient evidence, 'to establish a strong demonstrable need to extend protection to this group.'

But our research paints a very different picture. It tells us that 73% of alternative subculture hate crime goes unreported, so the scale is much bigger than the authorities can see or understand. If we want to effect real change in the criminal justice system, we have to speak up where it counts, by reporting these incidents.

Nothing can change if we fail to speak up.

Reporting is rehabilitative

Reporting hate crime is often the first step in safeguarding not only victims, but also perpetrators. Diverting young people from offending gives us the best chance of turning bad choices round and preventing future harm.
That's why, in addition to supporting people who've experienced hate crime, the Sophie Lancaster Foundation also works directly with perpetrators.

When young people start on the path of prejudicial and intolerant behaviour, that is the time to act. We must do all we can to challenge those views before they become entrenched – and that starts with reporting incidents of hate crime.

Reporting Checklist

It's clear by now that reporting hate crime is a good thing – for victims, perpetrators, and communities. What matters most, though, is identifying the right next steps for you.

Ask yourself what you need most at this moment:

- Do you feel unsafe and want protection?
- Do you want the behaviour to stop?
- Do you want the perpetrator to be held accountable?
- Or do you simply want support to help you cope and recover?

Once you understand what matters most to you, it becomes easier to decide what to do. If the issue involves neighbours, a discussion with a landlord or housing

association may be a good first move to give you a better chance at reconciliation. If you're experiencing threats, harassment, or violence, going to the police is likely the safest option.

If you do decide to go ahead and report a hate crime, there are a variety of ways to do it. You can report in person, on the phone, or online. You can report directly to the police or use a third-party reporting centre like the Sophie Lancaster Foundation, if you prefer. Our section 'Who can I report this to?' goes into more detail and gives you relevant contact information.

CHAPTER 5: Say It Again.

What to do when your incident hasn't been resolved or you need to follow up

Told my story, kept it super simple, straight
Coppers smoothed it down and re-labelled the hate
Turned what happened into pure confusion
Told me I was biased with a warped perception

It didn't "fit the definition," said I'd read it wrong
Told me I'd taken the abuse too strong
Authority assumes it has a flawless opinion
Like I couldn't be an educated civilian

Say it again – I know what I saw
Say it again – this is the last straw
Say it again – the truth will out
If I say it again – I'm never backin' down

So now I'm fighting two things at once
The abuse I got and the cops who confront
Double the damage, double the pain
Being told that HATE wasn't what I claim

"We'll see", "we'll log it" – it's all hot air
Nothing ever moves and you're left standing there
Not a single follow-up, not a status update
If I don't insist, again, that this was hate

Say it again – better listen this time
Say it again – this was a hate crime
Say it again – you'll regret it when I'm back

With cuts and bruises from a brutal attack

Who are you to dismiss me, or slam the door?
You don't really know what I'm standing for
I'll never unlearn what I've been told
Just because you won't even call it your own

What to say again?

So many people contact us after they have experienced hate in some form, devastated not only by the incident, itself, but also by the response they received from the person or authority they reported it to.

Hard truth: the people who are there to help you will sometimes fail you. They may not have the understanding, resources, or will to do what's needed. There may even be a prejudicial element to their response, which paints you as more perpetrator than victim. This leaving you struggling not only with the issue you reported, but now with the lazy stereotyping of the person you reached out to.

But don't be put off. Say it again, and say it with the authority of someone who's ell informed of their rights. After all, getting the incident logged as a hate crime could have a bigger impact than not doing.

Hate crimes often carry higher sentences for perpetrators than similar crimes not deemed to be driven by hate. See our section 'Who cares if it's a hate crime?' for the reasons why this is. In Sophie's case for instance, the judge made sure the sentencing reflected both the seriousness of, and intent behind, the crime.

So the importance of getting this logged accurately couldn't be clearer. Here's how to bounce back from a rejection by the authorities.

Re-assert that it is a hate crime

One of the first obstacles you're likely to experience – according to our community – is to be told that you're not from one of the monitored strands of hate, so what you experienced, 'can't be a hate crime.'

If the police tell you this, calmly read them the following statement from the College of Policing for England and Wales' Authorised Professional Practice guide:

> 'The five monitored strands are the minimum categories that police officers and staff must record and flag. There are, however, other groups and individuals who may be targeted due to their personal characteristics. Forces, agencies and partnerships can extend their local policy response to include hostility against other groups or personal characteristics, they believe are prevalent in their area or that are causing concern to their community.'

Also, politely remind them that the Professional Practice guide, itself, includes a case study of Sophie Lancaster's murder in a hate crime attack – which targeted her for exactly the same reasons you're being targeted. And don't forget to add that The Law Commission said, in its December 2021 report on Hate Crime Laws:

> 'We recognise that criminal targeting of members of alternative subcultures occurs in England and Wales, and that in many cases this is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards the victim's membership of that group.'

Make it plain that the authorities' own literature legitimises your report of a hate crime.

Take your report up the chain of command

In spite of legislation and guidance that gives weight to your report of a hate crime, sometimes it just won't filter through to frontline officers who take reports and investigate crimes. (No matter how much you assert it calmly and

with authority.)

Our own 2022 research, in fact, told us that over half of respondents who reported hate crime to the police with either ‘fairly’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ with the response. When this happens, it’s time to take your report up the chain of command. There is much more chance you will get the support you need if you remain factual, polite and point out clearly how you have been failed by the process.

Gaps in the process, failures to notify you of outcomes, failure to gather evidence or statements, are good examples. Also include any stereotyping comments that may have been made to you at the time of reporting, particularly if it were suggested that the problem was rooted in your identity.

Here’s who you can contact next:

The Chief Constable of the service you reported the incident to

Factually repeat the incident you reported, plus a detailed report of the police response. Say why you feel that the service you received was unsatisfactory, as well as what you would like to happen next.

Keep your tone professional and factual, because it won’t help your case if you come across as cynical or angry.

Your local Police and Crime Commissioner

Follow the above steps. Tell the Commissioner why the service you have received was unsatisfactory. State what you would like to happen next.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

The IOPC is a completely independent watchdog for police complaints in England and Wales. They investigate the most serious complaints and conduct matters involving the police and set the standards by which the police should handle complaints.

Your local MP

You can contact them via their parliamentary email address or at their constituency office. Details can be found on their social media accounts or on the UK Parliament website. The process is the same. Tell them what incident happened to you, what response you received following your report, and how you have been failed by the process, i.e., what you feel should have happened.

Another route you could consider, if all else fails, is to contact the media. Not everyone wants to go down this route but, if no one is listening and you feel your case highlights issues of public concern and points to a miscarriage of justice, it could be a useful option.

It can be bruising to go through the criminal justice system and, sadly, even when there is will from the authorities to support you, things don't always go in the right direction. See our section on 'Who can help me get over this?' for information on organisations offering support. Your physical and mental health are paramount. We can't control the behaviour of who you report crime to or the outcome of the investigation, but we can support people to find a way through the process.

CHAPTER 6: Back 2 Skool 4U.

Supporting a child bullied or targeted for their alternative identity

Guess what, it's not just kids messing about
Guess what, it won't fade if you wait it out
Guess what, names hurt and words land hard
Your kid might spend their whole life being on guard

You see it in the way they've started to shrink
Like they're on a precipice, on some kinda brink
I challenge you, what are you gonna do
To help someone who relies on you?

Back 2 skool 4u
Here's a lesson you need
Back 2 skool 4u
Parent's better pay heed
Back 2 skool 4u
I'm talking teachers too
Back 2 skool 4u
If you want a breakthrough

Sometimes it's pupils, sometimes it's staff
Sometimes it's written off as "having a laugh"
Rules about hair, clothes, piercings, and face
Telling kids they better get to know their place

They're gonna end up believin' it's all their fault
When the punches land from the next assault
Wishing they were anyone but themselves
Feelin' loss of control, feelin' overwhelmed

Back 2 skool 4u
Better know what's going down
Back 2 skool 4u
Just take a look around
Back 2 skool 4u
Don't put your head in the sand
Back 2 skool 4u
If you want to understand

School's meant to be where kids go to grow
Not where they learn they're wrong to show
Who they are, what they love, what makes them cool
If you don't see that, you're the one who's been fooled,
Back 2 skool!

How to support a child being bullied in school for their alternative identity.
This chapter could not be more important to us.

We can't go a day without alternative people telling us that their school days were horrendous. Virtually every band and famous artist we ever meet - people we now see as influential and successful - tell us over and over that they were singled out at school and made to suffer, just because they were 'different.'

In fact, most of the support requests we get are from parents, caregivers, and family members of young people who are suffering in school or college due to bullying and intolerance of their alternative identity.

We know how hard it is in education right now and we know how many fabulous and caring teachers there are out there. But we still see pupils being demeaned and victimised just for being themselves. Often, when these alternative young people are

subjected to harassment and hate, they also find themselves being blamed for their own abuse:

- “Why don’t you wear something different?”
- “Why would you want tattoos and piercings?”
- “Why don’t you do something with your hair?”
- “You’re doing this to be different, so don’t be surprised when people treat you differently.”

We’ve also witnessed a trend of alternative pupils being bullied for multiple characteristics of their identity. Our own recent research highlights that many people within the wider alternative community identify as trans, neurodivergent, or live with mental health challenges – and often experience more than one of these characteristics simultaneously. So, when bullying takes place, it can be multipronged, thereby compounding the damage it causes.

Why does bullying happen?

The bullying generally starts because alternative pupils are singled out for their difference. There are unwritten social rules in school communities about what’s ‘normal,’ so bullies will often target alternative students to police those norms, reinforcing what they think everyone should be like. It’s just easy targeting.

Alternative pupils are visibly different and bullies tend to pick on peers who stand out and are easy for them and their mates to identify. It’s an ‘us vs. them’ attitude that stems from teen social groups’ tendency to form identities around belonging.

Bullying becomes a way for the dominant group to strengthen their own identity by excluding someone else. They’ll choose people who they perceive to have lower social power, i.e., those least likely to retaliate, those with fewer, or quieter, friends, and those with less social status. They’ll also choose those whose difference they fear.

Adolescence is a time when many young people are trying hard to fit in. Someone who confidently rejects mainstream norms can make others feel uncomfortable or insecure (a bully may even be jealous of the alternative pupil's visible independence) so the bullying can be a reaction to that discomfort.

How is bullying dealt with in schools?

All too often, schools fall back on standardised processes and procedures when bullying starts (who told who what; who got involved; what the timeline was). But, as important as those things are, it's not the real issue.

Long before repeated harassment and violence takes place, all those attitudes we mentioned around social norms, and deviations from them, are formed. And that's when young people end up being screamed at for being a goth or told to "take a bath" or told they should "just slit their wrists." That's why our Foundation works so hard to get our message into schools and to do sessions with pupils to help them understand and process their feelings – as well as they damage they inflict when they pick on other people.

What parents and carers can do

If your child is being bullied at school because of their alternative identity, one of the most important things you can do is to take the situation seriously and keep asking school for support.

Most parents and carers start by contacting their child's Form Tutor or Head of Year, explaining what's been happening and how it's affecting their child. This is the right first step. Many of the families who contact us, do so because school has not responded, or that response doesn't achieve anything. If this happens, don't give up. You're entitled to escalate the matter. If you don't receive a response, or nothing changes, you should contact the Headteacher or the school's safeguarding lead.

The most effective approach is to make it clear that you want to work with the school to find a solution, while also firmly stating that there's a serious problem to address.

When writing to senior staff, it can be helpful to include:

- What incidents have occurred, who was involved, who witnessed them, and over what timescale.
- Make an explicit statement about the reason you believe the child is being targeted. You could also include a statement from the child on why they believe they are being targeted. Don't be afraid to put in more than one reason.
- The impact this is having on your child's wellbeing, mental health, and ability to focus on their schoolwork.
- Whether your child feels unsafe in particular areas of the school, such as classrooms, corridors, the yard or cafeteria.
- Whether the situation is escalating, and your concerns about what may happen if it continues.
- Details of who you have already reported the bullying to, and what (if anything) has been done.
- A clear statement that you wish to work with the school but expect action to be taken.

It can also be important to emphasise that repeated bullying based on identity or appearance is not trivial. Police recognise that people from alternative subcultures are often targeted because of how they look or express themselves, and that this kind of hostility can escalate if it is not challenged. Highlighting the serious psychological impact of ongoing victimisation can help schools understand that this is not 'banter', but a safeguarding issue.

You may also find it useful to reference organisations such as our Foundation, which provides specialist support around bullying and hate crime targeting alternative young people. Our work is recognised by police and education

professionals, and our educational resources can support schools in addressing prejudice more effectively.

Anti bullying email templates

If you need to escalate the subject of your child's bullying to the senior staff, here are a few templates you can use or adapt:

1. Hate and identity

Dear [staff member's name],

[Child's Name] has been repeatedly subjected to [verbal abuse/harassment/ physical assault] because of their alternative identity. Dismissing these incidents as one-off events fails to recognise a clear pattern of targeted hostility, simply for their perceived difference. [Child's Name]'s safety and wellbeing must be prioritised, and urgent steps are required to ensure they are safe in school.

Hate crime extends beyond protected characteristics, with police recognising that individuals from alternative subcultures are also targeted. Evidence shows that perpetrators of hateful behaviour escalate when their actions are not challenged. None of us want to see this progress further before action is taken.

Repeated victimisation based on a person's appearance or identity has devastating consequences, ranging from self-harm to escalating violence. The psychological toll is profound, particularly when pupils feel the only escape from targeted hostility is to suppress or deny who they truly are.

I look forward to hearing your strategies for how you intend to promote acceptance of subcultural difference in your school and to promote a pupil community that shows greater tolerance of alternative young people.

Please contact the Sophie Lancaster Foundation, a charity that advocates for

the alternative community, if you would like advice or more information on alternative subculture identity.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

2. Desired school approach

Dear [staff member's name],

[Child's Name] continues to be bullied based on their alternative identity. From here on, they, and all other children undergoing this level of targeted abuse, should be assigned a named member of staff with whom they have a good relationship, so that they can report any additional incidents to them.

This will stop every report seeming to be a fresh one and the staff member will be in a better position to provide [Child's Name] with ongoing support and take necessary action. The school must take steps to tackle the bullying [Child's Name] is being subjected to, with zero tolerance for every incident. All incidents of bullying should be critically examined with everything done to stop these incidents at source and not allow them to gather momentum.

There must be a broader and more coordinated approach than that currently in place. Targeting individuals with violence, abuse, or harassment because of their identity is unacceptable. We do not need to look alike, share the same interests, or think in the same way, but we do need to respect difference and refrain from hostility toward those we do not relate to. This must be addressed as a whole school issue and treated as a critical part of young people's learning as they progress through school and prepare to take their place in society.

Students who display this bullying behaviour must also be safeguarded. If such conduct is allowed to continue without clear intervention or consequences, it is

likely to escalate. Without appropriate action, there is a real risk that these students may one day engage in behaviour with irreversible consequences for themselves and for those they target.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

3. Sophie Lancaster Foundation

Dear [staff member's name],

In order to tackle the ongoing issue of pupils being bullied in your school, I recommend that you reach out to The Sophie Lancaster Foundation, a charity that provides specialist support in this area.

The Foundation was established following Sophie Lancaster's murder in 2007, a targeted hate crime motivated solely by her alternative identity. Their team works closely with police and criminal justice organisations to ensure that hate incidents in schools (particularly those directed at children with alternative identities) are recognised and taken seriously.

Sophie Lancaster Foundation also develops a wide range of educational resources, many of which are free to access. These resources support students in developing empathy and critical thinking skills. Educating peers can be a highly effective way of protecting children who may be vulnerable to bullying, turning bystanders into upstanders who actively challenge prejudice. For the child being bullied, this support can be genuinely life changing.

Please contact the Foundation direct to find out more. Their advice is free and they will do all they can to help:

Email: education@sophielancasterfoundation.com

Website: www.sophielancasterfoundation.com

Sincerely,
[Your name]

If all else fails – escalate

If the situation does not improve after involving the Headteacher and Safeguarding Lead, or you are unhappy with the outcome, you can escalate your concerns externally.

Your first step should be to contact the school's governing body, academy trust, or local authority. When doing this, clearly explain:

- The original concern you reported
- What actions the school has taken so far
- The outcome of those actions
- Why you remain dissatisfied with the school's response

You can also contact the Department of Education (DfE) and Ofsted once the school's internal processes are complete. These organisations do not investigate individual cases but will consider wider or systemic issues.

- The Department for Education may become involved if a school has failed to follow its legal duties or its own complaints procedures.
- Ofsted considers serious, systemic concerns about school leadership, safeguarding, or pupil safety rather than individual outcomes.

Schools have legal responsibilities to safeguard pupils and prevent discrimination. Bullying that involves threats, harassment, or violence may amount to criminal behaviour and should be reported to the police.

Bullying outside of school

Bullying doesn't only happen on school premises. Incidents on school buses, in town centres, or other public spaces can be just as frightening and harmful, and schools still have a responsibility to respond.

Headteachers in state schools have the legal power to take action over bad behaviour that happens outside the school gates if it affects students' safety, wellbeing, or the wider school community.

All off-site incidents should be reported to the school, and you should keep a detailed record of what happened. If the behaviour involves threats, harassment or physical harm, the police should be contacted. You can also request a copy of the school's anti-bullying policy, which explains how these situations should be handled.

Online bullying

Cyberbullying is now one of the most common forms of harassment faced by young people. It can include sustained abuse, spreading rumours, exclusion, or sharing private information or images. It's often relentless and can leave young people feeling trapped, powerless and unsafe.

If your child experiences online bullying, encourage them not to respond, as this can escalate the situation and make it appear like a mutual conflict. Take screenshots of messages and posts before they are deleted and keep a record.

Use the reporting and blocking tools on social media and gaming platforms, even if they seem ineffective, as this is usually required before schools or police can act.

Serious cases involving threats or harassment should be reported to the police. If indecent images are involved, do not download or store them; instead, record

contextual information such as usernames, profile links and timestamps, and contact the police for advice.

Supporting the child at home

Alongside formal action, what you do at home matters deeply. Bullying can seriously damage a young person's confidence and self-esteem, and it is vital to reinforce that there's nothing wrong with who they are. The problem is the behaviour directed at them, not their identity. Celebrate your child's interests and appearance and help them spend time with people who accept and understand them. These relationships can be protective and life-affirming.

Encourage hobbies, creative outlets or time outside in the fresh air. Time away from screens can also help... normality.

Talking openly about identity can be helpful too. Young people often feel pressured to change themselves to avoid harm, so reminding them that their individuality has value can make a massive difference. Resources that present alternative identities in a positive light can also support this process, especially when they're created by people with lived experience. See our section 'Who can help me get over this?' for suggested resources to help.

Bullying is overwhelming for both alternative pupils and their families. Even with strong support, it can drain joy and confidence. If things don't improve, reach out to our Foundation for more advice and we'll do our best to help you.

CHAPTER 7: You've Got Options.

Who you can report hate crime to.

You don't have to face this alone
Don't have to carry it on your own
I know the system can feel cold
Like you've been shut out, overlooked

Maybe you tried and got brushed aside
Maybe you've got no faith left to try
But staying silent keeps it the same
And you deserve more than that again

There's more than one way to be heard
More than one place to say the words
If one door shuts, there's others there
People who listen, people who care

Not just uniforms, not just the law
There's hands that help you through the door
You don't have to do this alone
You don't have to make that call on your own

YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS – DON'T BACK DOWN
There's more than one way to make it count
YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS – HEAR ME NOW
There's more than one way to be found

YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS – USE YOUR VOICE
Even if it shakes, it's still a choice
YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS – TAKE CONTROL

You don’t have to do this alone

Police, support, someone in between
Online, in person, or off the scene
Anonymous if that’s what you need
There’s ways to speak without being seen

Every report draws out the truth
Every voice adds living proof
This is bigger than just one case
It’s how we start to change this place

YOU’VE GOT OPTIONS – DON’T GIVE IN
There’s strength in where you begin
YOU’VE GOT OPTIONS – TAKE THE STEP
Even if you’re not ready yet

YOU’VE GOT OPTIONS – MAKE IT REAL
Say what happened, say how you feel
YOU’VE GOT OPTIONS – STAND YOUR GROUND
There’s people out there who will back you now

Who can I report this to?
If you experience or witness hate, we know it can be intimidating to report it, especially if you feel different or outside the norm and this has impacted previously on your own experiences of justice. But speaking up is the only way to make a difference.

The police can take action, the scale of the problem can be seen, and you can get the support you need. If you don’t report it, nothing changes.
If you don’t want to report it directly to the police, there are other safe places and organisations listed below that you can reach out to.

The Police

- Call 999 in an emergency.
- Call 101 for non-emergency enquiries.
- If you have a hearing or speech impairment, use the police textphone service on 18001 101.
- Some local police services allow you to report online, find out if you can here.
- True Vision is the national police hate crime reporting website. We hear good feedback about this portal. The website recognises that people from alternative subcultures are targeted for hate crime and they feature Sophie's case. Reports are made online and then directed to your local police. By reporting here, the police can gain a greater understanding of the scale of alternative subculture hate crime nationally.

Charities that support you to report hate crime

Galop – LGBTQ+ helpline and advice for hate crime, online abuse or violence targeting you because of your sexual orientation or gender identity. Signposting to reporting options.

Community Security Trust (CST) – online reporting and support for victims of antisemitic hate crime.

Sophie Lancaster Foundation – advocates for people from alternative subcultures. You can report hate crime to us and we can pass your report on to the police. This can be anonymous if you wish. This is not a 7-day or 24-hour service however we will treat your request as a priority. Contact: hatecrime@sophielancasterfoundation.com.

Stop Hate UK – nationwide hate crime reporting service but covers specific geographical areas. Can pass reports to police and provides support services. 24/7 telephone helpline, online form and chat are all available.

Tell MAMA – support with reporting anti-Muslim hatred to the police. Also signposting to advocacy and local services. Support offered via phone line, text messaging and email.

CHAPTER 8: Never on your own

Where to find support after experiencing hate.

IT DOESN'T STOP WHEN IT'S OVER AND DONE
IT STICKS AROUND WHEN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN
IN HOW YOU WALK, IN WHERE YOU GO
IN EVERY PLACE YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE NO MORE

It gets in your head, rewrites the day
Makes you pull back, makes you stay away
Like the world got smaller overnight
And you're the only one who feels it bite

But you're not the only one who's been here
Not the only one who's felt that fear
Not the only one who's shut down slow
Trying to carry what no one should

NEVER ON YOUR OWN – NOT TONIGHT
There's people who see you, who know you're right
NEVER ON YOUR OWN – DON'T BELIEVE
The lie that says you've got to leave
NEVER ON YOUR OWN – NOT THIS TIME
There's help out there, you don't have to hide
YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR OWN – HOLD THAT LINE
There's more of us than you think you'll find

Talk to someone, take that step
Even if you're not ready yet
Online if you want, or face to face
There's different ways to make a complaint

It’s not weak to need support
It’s not losing, it’s moving forward
What they did doesn’t define
The way you heal, the way you climb

NEVER ON YOUR OWN – HEAR THIS NOW
You don’t have to carry this by yourself
NEVER ON YOUR OWN – REACH OUT
There’s people ready to help
NEVER ON YOUR OWN – STAND STILL
You don’t have to run or disappear
NEVER ON YOUR OWN – STAY REAL

There’s a way through from here
They tried to cut you off, make you small
Make you feel like you don’t belong at all
But you’re still here – and that’s enough
And there’s people ready when it gets too much

Who can help me get over this?

Experiencing a hate crime can leave deep emotional scars, shaking your sense of safety, trust, and belonging. The impact is not only immediate but can also take a serious toll on your mental health, leaving feelings of fear, anger, or isolation. You are not alone in this.

There are people and organisations who understand the harm hate causes and can offer support, guidance, and practical help.
Below are suggestions for organisations and resources that may be able to help you.

Support and resources for alternative subculture:

- All Different. All Belong.

An illustrated zine for young people that celebrates and encourages understanding of alternative identities. Created by the Sophie Lancaster Foundation in collaboration with artist and writer Phoenix Gould, the zine presents alternative people in a positive light while challenging the myths and stereotypes that can lead to bullying and prejudice.

Designed for use in schools or for parents to share with their children, it's available in two versions, tailored for primary and secondary age groups. You can download a free digital copy here or purchase a printed edition for £4.00 from the SLF online store.

- Heavy Metal Therapy

Peer-support meetups and online resources for metal fans. Informal facilitated sessions to chat about mental health and music. Groups exist in places across the UK and online. They don't offer treatment or clinical services but provide space for shared experience and coping discussions.

- Sophie Lancaster Foundation

We advocate and support the alternative community. We are not clinically trained, but will do our best to give advice and signpost you to appropriate services following hate crime.

UPRAWR Mental Health Foundation

Offers free counselling and weekly online group sessions. Specifically for people who identify with rock and alternative music scenes. UK-based and accessible online. Provides both one to one therapy and group counselling led by professionals. Their mission is to support 'the people who love rock and alternative music.'

Support for mental health and crisis support:

Hub of Hope

National database of charities and organisations that offer mental health advice, including for family members.

Kooth

Mental health and emotional support for Under-18s. You don't need a GP referral, and you can sign up yourself online.

Mind

Information, guidance, and local services and helpline.

Qwell

Online mental health support service for adults that provides a safe space to talk and find support.

Rethink Mental Illness

Services and advice on living with mental illness or caring for someone who is.

Samaritans

Emotional support for anyone in distress via 24-hour phone and online chat.

Shout

Free 24/7 crisis text support (text SHOUT to 85258).

Young Minds

Advice and support for under-25s and parents' helpline.

Hate crime and victim support:

Organisations offering support and signposting following hate crime even if you decide not to report it.

ChildLine

Confidential and free online and phone counselling service for those aged under 19 anywhere in the UK.

My Support Space

Online resource from Victim Support to help you manage the impact crime has had on you. It's for people aged 16 and over who have experienced crime and need help to cope and move forward.

Stop Hate UK

Confidential reporting and advice, operates in selected geographical areas. Visit the website to check if your area is covered.

True Vision

Police-supported online hate crime reporting portal with links to support organisations.

Victim Support

Free, confidential emotional/ practical help; 24/7 support line and online tools. Telephone: 0808 16 89 111.

Race and religious hate crime support

Community Security Trust

Supports victims of antisemitic hate.

Friends, Families and Travellers

Advice and support for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people.

Tell MAMA

Monitors and supports victims of anti-Muslim hate.

LGBTQ+ hate crime support

Galop

Support for LGBTQ+ people who have experienced abuse and violence.

Disability and neurodiversity support

Action for Neurodiversity

Counselling/emotional support from autism-experienced practitioners (not for times of crisis).

Dimensions

Supports adults with learning disabilities and autistic people to have a louder voice, choice, and control in their lives.

Mencap

Support for people with learning disabilities, as well as their families and carers.

National Autistic Society

Information, online community and support.

Scope

Charity that works for equality and fairness for disabled people.

The Sophie Lancaster Foundation - Registered Charity No: 1129689

Words by Nick Mitchell – chezzagency.com | chezz
Illustrations by @OrphicDusk - Phoenix Gould
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